

*Press Office*  
**U.S. Department of Homeland Security**

# Press Release

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## **DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY SECRETARY TOM RIDGE APPROVES NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NIMS)**

(Washington, DC) Mar. 1, 2004 - U. S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge today announced approval of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Nation's first standardized management plan that creates a unified structure for Federal, state, and local lines of government for incident response. "NIMS gives all of our Nation's responders the same framework for incident management and fully puts into practice the concept of one mission, one team, one fight," Ridge said.

"I recognize the efforts of the dedicated professionals from state and local governments, law enforcement, the fire and emergency management communities, emergency medical services, tribal associations, public health, the private sector, public works, and non-governmental organizations across America who teamed together in a collaborative effort to create NIMS," Ridge said. "This unique system provides all of our Nation's first-responders and authorities with the same foundation for incident management, in terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and other emergencies. From our Nation to our neighborhoods, America is safer."

NIMS strengthens America's response capabilities by identifying and integrating core elements and best practices for all responders and incident managers. Through a balance between flexibility and standardization, and use of common doctrine, terminology, concepts, principles, and processes, execution during a real incident will be consistent and seamless. Responders will be able to focus more on response, instead of organizing the response, and teamwork and assignments among all authorities will be clearly enhanced. Key elements and features of NIMS include:

- **Incident Command System (ICS).** NIMS outlines a standard incident management organization called ICS that establishes five functional areas - command, operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration - for management of all major incidents. To ensure further coordination and during incidents involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies, the principle of unified command has been universally incorporated into NIMS. This unified command not only coordinates the efforts of many jurisdictions, but provides for and assures joint decisions on objectives, strategies, plans, priorities, and public communications.
- **Preparedness.** Responder readiness to manage and conduct incident actions is significantly enhanced if professionals have worked together before an incident. NIMS recognizes this and defines advance preparedness measures such as planning, training, exercises, qualification and certification, equipment

acquisition and certification, and publication management. Preparedness also incorporates mitigation activities such as public education, enforcement of building standards and codes, and preventive measures to deter or lessen the loss of life or property.

- **Communications and Information Management.** Standardized communications during an incident are essential and NIMS prescribes interoperable communications systems for both incident and information management. Responders and managers across all agencies and jurisdictions must have a common operating picture for a more efficient and effective incident response.
- **Joint Information System (JIS).** NIMS organizational measures further enhance the public communication effort. The Joint Information System provides the public with timely and accurate incident information and unified public messages. This system employs Joint Information Centers and brings incident communicators together during an incident to develop, coordinate, and deliver a unified message. This will ensure that Federal, state, tribal, and local levels of government are releasing the same information during an incident.
- **NIMS Integration Center (NIC).** To ensure that NIMS remains an accurate and effective management tool, the NIMS NIC will be established by the Secretary of Homeland Security to assess proposed changes to NIMS, capture and evaluate lessons learned, and employ best practices. The NIC will provide strategic direction and oversight of the NIMS, supporting both routine maintenance and continuous refinement of the system and its components over the long term. The NIC will develop and facilitate national standards for NIMS education and training, first responder communications and equipment, typing of resources, qualification and credentialing of incident management and responder personnel, and standardization of equipment maintenance and resources. The NIC will continue to use the collaborative process of Federal, state, tribal, local, multi-discipline and private authorities to assess prospective changes and assure continuity and accuracy.

The completion of NIMS follows the October 2003 nationwide deployment of the Initial National Response Plan (INRP) which represented the first step in aligning incident management response and actions between all Federal, state, tribal, local, and private communities. A final National Response Plan is under development and will eventually replace the INRP, while NIMS will continue to provide the Nation's doctrinal guidance for incident management for acts of terrorism, natural disasters, and other emergencies.

NIMS is available at [www.DHS.gov](http://www.DHS.gov)

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